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Statement submitted by International Shinto Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

A Japanese NGO's Attempt — Poverty Support for Real Self-Reliance

This is a small scale support, but remarkable endeavor for poverty eradication made by a Japanese NGO, the field of activity of which is disaster recovery assistance. Disaster usually directly leads to poverty and the disaster-stricken area mostly equals to poor area in developing countries. This NGO has only two full-time staff. Their operational funds are mostly donated by citizens, so not abundant. Nevertheless, it has developed a variety of supports in the 37 areas worldwide, resulting in impressive recovery and showing amazing cost performances. They have focused on long-term recovery assistance for whoever was left behind in large-scale assistance, and remain as long as possible in the disaster-stricken region even after other NGOs went back to their countries. The NGO aims to bring out the latent abilities of the local community and victims through long-term elaborated and thoughtful relationships, leading to the improvement of the conditions better than that before the disaster.

A variety of activities have been carried out for poverty eradication, including cash distribution with no duty of repayment, free school lunch, or employment in the public projects. Such system may work well when there are sufficient funds and materials, but this outside-adding type of support would not necessarily lead to their sustainable independence and getting out of poverty.

In the April 2015 Nepal Earthquake, the NGO supported depopulated Gudel Village located in the isolated mountainous region. Since the earthquake took place, no assistance had been offered and no media had reported this village, which means the village had been completely left behind and forgotten. The NGO launched a common-house reconstruction project in the village. The NGO representative called in local carpenters and arranged earthquake-strengthening skills learning workshops by an expert professor for building the house. He said, "It may be easier and quicker to rebuild if we bring an outside carpenter with earthquake-resistant skills, but it would not strengthen the local power". The NGO representative hoped the villagers would make the most of the devastated situation for their better prosperity of the future, rather than just remedying the current situation.

Initially, the carpenters were working, passively following the proposed building design. The NGO representative then requested them to make all their own possible efforts through try and error to maximize the earthquake resistance.

The NGO representative kept listening to the voices of the villagers and asking them, "What are the merits and the pride of this village?" to remind them of their love for their homeland and to spontaneously commit for its reconstruction. Then, one of the local carpenters, who was born in the village but had been fled to Kathmandu for better job and life, decided to return to the village and devote himself to the renaissance of his homeland. Thus, the village started recovering the self-reliant power for reconstruction. We think such self-reliant spirit to improve the situation would be the most crucial factor for sustainably getting out of poverty.